

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
July 13, 2000**

CITY OF NEEDLES WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY (Phil Gruenberg)

On June 20, 2000, the City of Needles held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for a newly constructed wastewater treatment plant. The new plant consists of an automatic rake bar screen, aerated grit chamber, two sequencing batch reactors, effluent equalization basin, and aerobic digester. The discharge from the plant is now routed to percolation basins rather than to the Colorado River. A decision on whether disinfection facilities will be required is dependent on forthcoming results of soil tests for time-of-travel of the percolated wastewater to the Colorado River. The City is currently working with its plant contractors to resolve some plant equipment problems that have been experienced.

The sequencing batch reactor plant was installed by the City to comply with the Regional Board's Cease and Desist Orders. Prior to the construction of the new treatment plant, the City operated a trickling filter treatment plant and discharged its effluent into the Colorado River. From July 1990 to June 1993, trickling filter plant effluent was discharged to emergency evaporation/percolation ponds 26% of the time. The effluent was discharged to the emergency ponds because the City's trickling filter plant was failing to remove biological oxygen demand and total suspended solids to an acceptable level for discharge to the Colorado River.

ACLC – CITY OF EL CENTRO (Phil Gruenberg)

The Executive Officer issued an administrative civil liability complaint (ACLC) for \$15,000 to the City of El Centro for a raw sewage spill and the discharge of undisinfected wastewater to receiving waters. The City of El Centro requested a supplemental environmental project in lieu of payment of a portion of the ACLC. The Executive Officer accepted an offer from the City to pay \$10,800 to Desert Wildlife Unlimited, Inc., which heads the Citizens Congressional Task Force on the New River, to support projects designed to improve the New River water quality. The remaining \$4,200 is to be paid to the SWRCB cleanup fund. Additionally, El Centro waived a Board hearing on the matter.

SALTON SEA ISSUES (Phil Gruenberg)

USEPA requested a meeting of many interested parties to discuss perceived deficiencies in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Salton Sea restoration project. The meeting was held on June 1 at the Regional Board office and was attended by approximately 30 people – primarily governmental agency representatives. The focus of the discussion was on the need to address Salton Sea water quality issues outside of salinity. After much discussion there seemed to be some consensus that water quality issues other than salinity were the responsibility of regulatory agencies, primarily the Regional Board and USEPA. Since the Salton Sea Authority (SSA) is not a regulatory agency, it is appropriate that it address salinity of the Salton Sea in coordination with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). It is the Regional Board staff's opinion that little can be accomplished addressing the Sea's salinity under the present regulatory structure, but that a publicly supported control project will be necessary as addressed in the EIS.

There seemed to be general agreement by meeting attendees that the EIS could be improved by addressing regulatory agencies' and tribal governments' efforts to improve Salton Sea water quality, and that coordination between those agencies, tribes, and the SSA/BOR needs to be improved. The information of a group, headed by Regional Board technical staff, to exchange water quality information was suggested as an additional step and is moving forward this month.

MEADERS CLEANERS (Ron S. Falkowski)

In 1987, Desert Water Agency (DWA) found Tetrachloroethene (PCE) and Trichloroethene (TCE) groundwater contamination in two of its wells, DWA No. 2 and DWA No. 6. DWA initiated a soil gas

investigation that led the Agency in 1995 to the contamination source, a property located at 711 Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. The Property is occupied by several businesses including Meaders Cleaners, a dry cleaning facility. From 1969 to 1991, Meaders Cleaners utilized an on site septic system for the disposal of wastewater, containing PCE and TCE. Consultants for Meaders Cleaners performed environmental investigations in 1995 and 1996 confirming the presence of PCE and TCE soil and groundwater contamination beneath the property.

In 1997 the RWQCB issued Cleanup and Abatement Order (CAO) 97-145, of which only one condition, Remedial Action Report, has been submitted. Attorneys for the responsible parties (i.e., landowner and facility operator) are attempting to reach an agreement with insurance carriers to finance the clean up. An arbitration meeting between the responsible parties and carriers is planned for August 2000.

TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD UPDATE (Summer Bundy)

Regional Board staff is developing two Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) – a New River pathogen TMDL and Alamo River sediment TMDL.

Contents of a TMDL

Regional Board consideration of a TMDL is preceded by a series of procedural requirements, and the release of several public review documents. These documents include:

- Notice of Public Hearing
- Notice of Filing
- Tentative Basin Plan Amendment incorporating the TMDL and Implementation Plan
- Tentative Regional Board Resolution to adopt the Basin Plan Amendment
- CEQA Checklist and CEQA Discussion
- “Technical TMDL” and “TMDL Implementation Plan”

These documents, which constitute the “TMDL Package,” will be sent to all known interested parties and to the State Clearinghouse, and will be made available on our Internet site. The Notice of Public Hearing will also be published in newspapers throughout the Region and posted in local post offices.

Revised TMDL Schedule

Staff proposes the following TMDL public review schedule for both the New River Pathogen TMDL and the Alamo River Sediment TMDL:

August 14	Released for Public Review Period (45 day review period)
September 13	Regional Board Workshop
September 28	End of Comment Period
September 28 – October 23	Staff addresses/responds to comments
October 24	Response to comments mailed out
November 8	Regional Board Public Hearing to consider adoption of Basin Plan Amendments

INLAND SURFACE WATERS PLAN (Adnan Al-Sarabi)

The State Office of Administrative law approved the State Board's *Policy for Implementation of Toxics Standards for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Basin and Estuaries of California* (hereafter “Policy”) on April 28, 2000. Since our regional surface waters are Inland Surface Waters, consistent with the requirements of the Policy, all NPDES permits to be considered by the Board after April 28, 2000 must fulfill the requirements of the Policy. Specifically, the new permits are to include: water quality monitoring requirements to determine if priority pollutant effluent limitations are reasonably necessitated, acute toxicity effluent limitations, chronic toxicity receiving water limitations/monitoring/reporting requirements,

monitoring of dioxin toxic equivalents, and appropriate priority pollutant effluent limitations where Reports of Waste Discharge show a reasonable potential to necessitate a limitation.

NPS STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT (Summer Bundy)

Consistent with the State's Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program and Watershed Management Initiative, stakeholder involvement is an integral component of the Regional nonpoint source pollution management efforts. Since January 1999, Regional Board staff has coordinated the Silt TMDL Technical Advisory Committee. Committee members include representatives from: Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District, Imperial County Farm Bureau (ICFB), US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, Audubon Society, Desert Wildlife Unlimited, Inc., and agricultural producers and landowners. The mission of the TAC is to: (1) advise the Regional Board staff with respect to the development and implementation of silt TMDLs for Ag Drains, and the New and Alamo Rivers in a timely fashion; and (2) provide expert resources, scientific evaluations, and recommendations on TMDL documents (e.g., problem statement, draft TMDLs, and implementation plans).

Staff and the TAC are currently working to refine a list of recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment control. This list is not to be considered prescriptive, but rather serves to provide land managers with a listing of practices known to minimize erosion.

As an outcome of continued dialogue with stakeholders, the Imperial County Farm Bureau has initiated a "Voluntary Watershed Program." The development and implementation of this program is consistent with the State's Three-Tiered approach to nonpoint source management, as it fosters self-determined approaches to water quality control. The specific goals of the Voluntary Watershed Program include: (1) coordination of workshops with local technical assistance agencies, (2) development of local subwatershed ("drainshed") groups, (3) identification of leaders within each of the local subwatershed groups who will provide demonstration implementation sites for field-testing of BMPs, (4) cooperation with Regional Board staff to develop a process for the subwatershed groups to track and report on the implementation and efficacy of BMPs, and (5) provide linkage to technical assistance agencies for BMP implementation assistance. The ICFB has designated the geographical areas for ten (10) subwatershed groups, each covering approximately 50,000 acres of irrigated land.

Already, the ICFB has held meetings in each of the ten subwatershed groups. Approximately ten percent of the people who were notified of the meetings attended, and of those, fifty percent have already "signed up" to participate in the program, with more sign-ups expected over the next couple of months. This framework is expected to play a critical role in TMDL implementation, and staff is encouraged by the progress shown to date.

WATER QUALITY GRANTS (Danny McClure)

Each year, grant funds are made available through the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Grant funding pursuant to Clean Water Act section 319(h) is for nonpoint source pollution control implementation projects, and grant funding pursuant to Clean Water Act section 205(j) is for water quality planning projects. The 319(h) and 205(j) grants are administered by the State and Regional Boards through grants to nonprofit entities such as local governments, resource conservation districts, and volunteer groups.

The request for proposals for these funds was released in March 2000. Regional Board staff published notices in regional newspapers, mailed announcements to the Interested Parties List, and hosted a proposal writing workshop. As in previous years, this year the Regional Board received several Clean Water Act grant proposals for water quality projects in the Region. Four 319(h) proposals and one 205(j) proposals were received by Region 7.

The 319(h) proposals Region 7 staff received were:

- A proposal from the Imperial County Farm Bureau to provide outreach, training, and on-farm technical assistance to local farmers on sediment reduction management practices;
- A proposal from the UC Cooperative Extension to develop and implement a curriculum for training irrigators in irrigation principals for the protection of water quality;
- A proposal from Desert Wildlife Unlimited, Inc. for continued operation and maintenance of the constructed wetlands along the New River near Brawley;
- A proposal from Cathedral City to design and install laterals and interceptors to eliminate the use of private septic systems in the Cove Area of Cathedral City; and
- A proposal from Defenders of the Wildlife (DOWL) for a trash cleanup, pollution prevention, and education project focused on recreational users of Lake Havasu.

The 205(j) proposal Region 7 staff received was:

- A proposal from Cathedral City for the design of sanitary sewer collectors and interceptors to eliminate the use of private septic systems in the Cove Area of Cathedral City.

The proposals for Region 7 will be ranked internally by staff, then subject to competitive ranking on a statewide basis by Regional Board, SWRCB, and USEPA representatives. Final approval lies with the SWRCB and the USEPA. Each region is also given the option of having one "set aside" project (of value less than or equal to \$130,000) that will be automatically funded without going through the statewide ranking. In November 2000, the project proponents will be notified as to whether or not their proposals were funded. Work can begin on the funded projects as early as July 2001.

ENFORCEMENT OF EFFLUENT DISINFECTION AT IMPERIAL VALLEY MUNICIPAL/DOMESTIC WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS (Beatrice Griffey)

Presently there are nine municipal/domestic wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in Imperial Valley that are discharging undisinfected secondarily treated municipal wastewater into surface waters, five within the New River Watershed and four within the Alamo River Watershed. The municipal/domestic wastewater treatment plants discharging into the New River Watershed are: City of Westmorland, Seeley County Water District, City of Brawley, Date Gardens Mobile Home Park, and McCabe Union School. The municipal/domestic wastewater treatment plants discharging into the Alamo River Watershed are: City of Holtville, Heber Public Utility District, Country Life R.V. and Mobile Home Park, and Sunset Mutual Water Company. These facilities discharge a maximum combined flow of about 6 million gallons per day (MGD) directly or indirectly into the New and Alamo Rivers (4.58 MGD and 1.54 MGD, respectively), which are the main tributaries of the Salton Sea. Based on facility monitoring reports, submitted in accordance National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, facility effluent contains pathogenic bacteria at concentrations that exceed the Board's Basin Plan water quality objectives (WQO) and are impairing the beneficial uses of receiving waters. Regional Board staff has recently issued a letter advising WWTPs, that effluent disinfection implementation will be required by June 30, 2003.

Regarding sources of municipal wastewater originating within Mexico, steady progress continues with the general cleanup of the New River in Mexicali. However, with regards to implementation of effluent disinfection at Mexicali WWTPs, minimal progress has been achieved and compliance with the New River bacterial WQO at the International Boundary is still expected by June 30, 2003. Regional Board staff intends to aggressively press for expeditious implementation.

PROPOSITION 13 – SMALL COMMUNITIES GRANT (Suhās Chakraborty)

On March 7, 2000, California voters approved Proposition 13, the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Act. The bond law authorizes the sum of \$34 million to be placed in the Small Communities Grant Account for issuance to qualifying small needy communities for the construction of publicly owned wastewater treatment facilities. For the purposes of this proposition, small needy communities are defined as having a population of less than or equal to 10,000 (1990 census) and having a median household income (1996) of less than \$32,000. Total State assistance shall not exceed \$3.5 million per project. Pursuant to the Implementation Policy for Small Communities Grant Program (SCG Policy, April 30, 1997), Regional Board staff solicited input from all County and City Offices within Region 7 boundaries for inclusion in the Regional SCG priority list. To date one proposal has been received; the City of Westmorland proposes to expand and improve the existing facility at an estimated cost of \$5,000,000. Recently, Region 7 staff submitted the Westmorland proposal to the State Water Resources Control Board for inclusion in the Statewide Project Priority List for consideration for formal adoption in the Statewide priority list.